

Statistics on the number of police officers assaulted in 2017/18, England and Wales

Key Figures

- In 2017/18 there were over 26,000 assaults on police officers in England and Wales (including British Transport Police). Of which:
 - 18,114 were crimes of “assault without injury on a constable” recorded across all forces (including the British Transport Police), an increase of 10% compared with 16,536 in the previous year.
 - 8,181 crimes of “assault with injury on a constable”¹ recorded across all forces (including British Transport Police).
- There were also just over 250 assaults involving injury reported to force health and safety teams by Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) (based on data from 41 of the 43 police forces in England and Wales, and excluding the British Transport Police).

Police recorded crime data

The data source for assaults on police officers is the police recorded crime series which are published within the latest “[Crime in England and Wales](#)” release by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Previously, it was only possible to identify assaults on police officers that did not result in injury. There was no corresponding crime classification for “assault with injury on a constable”, with such assaults recorded under the relevant offence classification, such as “violence with injury”. A new crime classification for “assault with injury on a constable” was introduced on the 1st April 2017, and this is the first year for which such data are available.

Previously, the Home Office used a combination of self-reported assaults data held within police forces’ Human Resource (HR) or health and safety systems and police recorded crime data of “assault without injury on a constable” to estimate the total number of assaults. Since the introduction of the new crime classification “assault with injury on a constable” data from forces’ health and safety systems are no longer required.

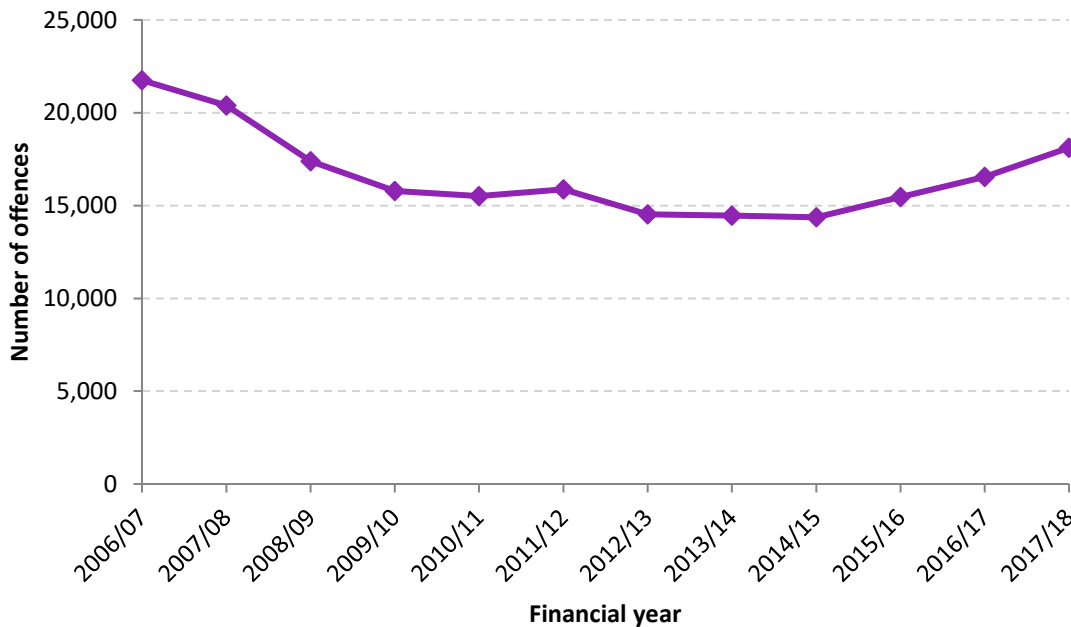
However, there are some differences between what is recorded on the health and safety systems, and what is recorded as a crime. Therefore, data in this note are not comparable with previous years. In particular, the new crime classification of “assault with injury on a constable” will exclude cases of more serious assaults. This is because, in line with the Home Office Counting Rules for recorded crime, the assault will be recorded under a more serious crime classification, such as “attempted murder” from which it is not possible to separately identify police officers.

Figure 1 shows the time series trend for the offence of “assault without injury on a constable”, which is comparable over time. Between 2006/07 and 2012/13 there has been a general downward trend in the number of offences of “assault without injury on a constable” recorded by the police. It then remained stable until 2015/16, when the number of offences increased by 8%, from 14,367 to 15,454 offences (a smaller increase than the 26% over the same period for all victims of “assault without injury”). In the year ending March 2018, 18,114 offences of “assault without injury on a constable”

¹ The crime code of “assault with injury on a constable” was introduced in April 2017. Previously there was no corresponding crime classification for “assault with injury on a constable”, with such assaults recorded under the relevant offence classification, such as “violence with injury”.

were recorded by the police, a 10% increase compared with the previous year (again a smaller increase than the 25% over the same period for all “assault without injury” cases).

Figure 1: Number of offences recorded under “assault without injury on a constable”, England and Wales¹, 2006/07 to 2017/18²



Notes:

1. Includes the British Transport Police
2. These figures are published in table A.04 of the [‘Crime in England and Wales’](#) statistical release.

For 2017/18 the Home Office collected data from forces crime recording systems, on a mandatory basis for the first time, on both the “assault without injury on a constable” **and** the “assault with injury on a constable” crime classifications. For 2017/18, all 43 of the police forces in England and Wales provided these data, although some stated that the quality was variable and that the data may not be complete. It is known that these data are likely to be an underestimate of the total number of assaults in some forces as many officers view assaults as part of the job and do not bother to raise a crime record. A further limitation of the data is that it is not always possible for forces to identify whether the police officer was on or off duty at the time of the assault. For these reasons, the figures in Annex A are not directly comparable at police force area level. In 2017/18 there were 8,181 offences of “assault with injury on a constable” recorded by the police. Caution should be exercised when comparing this figure with the estimates reported for 2015/16 and 2016/17, which were less complete data from a smaller number of forces (15 and 20 forces respectively), and based on a relatively crude estimation method using forces’ health and safety systems.

Data on assaults are **NOT** National Statistics, due to their known limitations. The data are not thought to provide a complete picture of assaults against police officers and there are a number of comparability issues across forces as described above.

Police community support officers

Self-reported assaults data are collected separately for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). In 2017/18, data from 41 of the 43 forces showed that there were 256 self-reported assaults on PCSOs in England and Wales (excludes the British Transport Police). These self-reported assaults data do not on their own show the true scale of assaults. It is usually voluntary for staff to report them

to their health and safety or HR teams, and many do not do so. Comparisons across forces should therefore be made with caution, as a higher number of assaults may reflect an increased likelihood of officers reporting the assaults, rather than an increased risk of assault. Comparisons over time should also be made with caution due to the change in definition. It is noticeable that the number of assaults on PCSOs is far lower than for officers, even when considered relative to their numbers. This is likely to reflect the different role of PCSOs, including the fact that they are not able to use force or exercise powers such as that of arrest. These are likely to decrease the risk of falling victim to an assault.

Annex A: Assaults on police officers, England and Wales, 2017/18

Force name	Police recorded crime - Assault with injury on a constable	Police recorded crime - Assault without injury on a constable	Total assaults on a constable (with and without injury)
Avon & Somerset	236	519	755
Bedfordshire	89	191	280
British Transport Police	125	488	613
Cambridgeshire	81	372	453
Cheshire	168	361	529
Cleveland	82	162	244
Cumbria	65	216	281
Derbyshire	127	202	329
Devon & Cornwall	189	526	715
Dorset	79	258	337
Durham	63	307	370
Dyfed-Powys	51	125	176
Essex	211	545	756
Gloucestershire	96	100	196
Greater Manchester	322	709	1,031
Gwent	47	161	208
Hampshire	407	752	1,159
Hertfordshire	221	492	713
Humberside	128	305	433
Kent	189	923	1,112
Lancashire	144	274	418
Leicestershire	74	238	312
Lincolnshire	68	228	296
London, City of	7	16	23
Merseyside	228	258	486
Metropolitan Police	1,262	2,713	3,975
Norfolk	136	382	518
North Wales	268	170	438
North Yorkshire	93	231	324
Northamptonshire	117	263	380
Northumbria	105	518	623
Nottinghamshire	235	200	435
South Wales	222	301	523
South Yorkshire	241	236	477
Staffordshire	178	340	518
Suffolk	82	259	341
Surrey	134	380	514
Sussex	263	587	850
Thames Valley	166	628	794
Warwickshire	81	138	219
West Mercia	196	383	579
West Midlands	351	549	900
West Yorkshire	413	953	1,366
Wiltshire	141	155	296
England and Wales	8,181	18,114	26,295